

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 26, 2000**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, July 26, 2000, at 1 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. William Ingersoll of the United States Navy. A list of action items resulting from this meeting is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purposes of the meeting were to review the On-site Assessment Standard (Chapter 3) adopted at the Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting (NELAC VI), to discuss membership issues, and to make preparation for the upcoming interim meeting (NELAC VII).*

INTRODUCTION

While waiting for participants to assemble for the teleconference, committee members informally discussed the status of laboratory assessments currently being performed by the first class of approved NELAP accrediting authorities. Mr. Charles Dyer of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services indicated that he has recently performed several on-site assessments and that it has been a learning process.

REVIEW OF THE NELAC ON-SITE ASSESSMENT STANDARD (CHAPTER 3)

Mr. Ingersoll referred committee members to the Portable Document Format (PDF) file he had distributed electronically prior to the meeting. The committee reviewed the PDF file, which was provided to Mr. Ingersoll by Dr. Gene Tatsch of Research Triangle Institute (RTI) and constituted the complete On-site Assessment Standard proposed by the committee at NELAC VI, for accuracy and completeness. It was noted that proposed Appendices A and B were not referenced in the Standard because they do not yet exist. Mr. Ingersoll suggested that, depending upon how far the two appendices have come in development by October 30, the committee may want to propose additional language at NELAC VII. In the ensuing discussion, the committee noted the following minor discrepancies in the PDF file:

- C Inconsistent capitalization of “accrediting authority” - the committee noted inconsistencies in the capitalization of “accrediting authority” in all the chapters of the NELAC Standards. It was unanimously agreed that this is an editorial change that can be made at any time and that the issue should be referred to Ms. Jeanne Hankins, NELAC Director, or RTI to ensure consistent use and capitalization of “accrediting authority.”
- C Section 3.3.1 - The committee noted a missing line space after the heading “Frequency” and a missing article before “accrediting authority” in the first sentence of this section.
- C Section 3.4.1.2 - The committee noted that “accrediting authority” had been erroneously pluralized in the first sentence of this section. It was agreed that it should be made singular.

C Section 3.4.2 - The committee noted an extra space after the word “cover” in the third sentence of this section.

MEMBERSHIP ISSUES

Mr. Ingersoll referenced the two individuals under consideration to fill the vacant voting position on the committee. It was unanimously agreed that both candidates are highly qualified. Mr. Ingersoll asked committee members to e-mail him with their preference Friday, July 28, 2000.

PREPARATION FOR NELAC VII

Mr. Ingersoll noted that the dates for NELAC VII have been changed. The interim meeting will be held October 31 - November 3, 2000 at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas, NV. Some committee members expressed frustration that the meeting will conflict with the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) 2000 Conference in Washington, DC. Ms. Marlene Moore indicated that she has already registered for technical courses at ILAC 2000 and may be unable to attend NELAC VII. In addition, Mr. Dyer and Mr. Santos Urrea indicated that they might not be able to attend NELAC VII for other reasons.

The committee discussed how many working sessions they anticipate needing at NELAC VII. It was agreed that an update on Appendix A, an update on Appendix B, and discussion of proposed changes to Chapter 3 of the NELAC Standard could be accomplished in one half-day session. A discussion ensued on the potential need for changing the NELAC standards based on the experience of the NELAC accrediting authority assessors and/or the need for training of the assessors that addresses the differences between a NELAC assessment and the states' former programs. It was suggested that the most important thing the committee could do at NELAC VII is to gather information and provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas.

Mr. Ingersoll suggested that the committee form a subcommittee to work on the development of Appendix B (Technical Training Standard). He suggested that Mr. Jack Hall, Mr. David Friedman, and Mr. Richard Sheibley serve on the subcommittee. In subsequent discussion, it was noted that Mr. Sheibley is developing technical training criteria. Mr. Sheibley indicated that the development of the criteria is progressing slowly and noted that the committee had not received much feedback on training criteria at NELAC VI. Committee members agreed that the lack of feedback should not retard the committee's forward progress. The committee returned to their previous discussions of the level of technical knowledge necessary for assessors. It was suggested that the subcommittee pull common denominators from the Florida Department of Health method-specific technical checklists that Mr. Ingersoll had distributed to committee members and use those common denominators as a starting point for technical training criteria. Mr. Ingersoll asked committee members to focus on Appendix B for continued discussion in the committee's next teleconference.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

The committee entered into substantial discussion of assessment report deadlines and of what would happen to a laboratory's accreditation if an assessment report were delayed. It was noted that Section 3.5.6 of the On-site Assessment Standard specifies a 30-day deadline for submission of the assessment report to the laboratory. It was suggested that language be added to this section to allow for written arrangements to be made to extend the deadline. There was also substantial discussion of interpretation by assessors of laboratory requirements. It was suggested that language be added to Section 3.5 (Assessment Procedures) to address interpretation of requirements. Committee members expressed the need for a mechanism within NELAC to provide rapid laboratory response, perhaps even during the assessment, to assessor interpretations. It was suggested that the second paragraph of Section 3.5.5 (Closing Conference) could be revised to address this issue. It was also noted that the laboratory appeals process described in Chapter 4, Accreditation Process, of the NELAC Standard applies only to laboratories that have lost their accreditation. There was some discussion of whether these issues are On-site Assessment or Accreditation Process issues. The committee did not reach consensus on the issues so they were deferred for further discussion at a future meeting.

CONCLUSION

The allotted time for the teleconference having expired, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. EDT. The committee's next meeting is scheduled for August 9, 2000, at 1:00 p.m. EDT via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 26, 2000**

Item No.	Action	Responsible Member	Date to be Completed
1.	Committee to refer their editorial changes to the Chapter 3 PDF file to EPA or RTI.	W. Ingersoll	Immediately
2.	Committee to review resumes of prospective voting members and submit votes to Mr. Ingersoll via E-mail.	All	7/28/00
3.	Committee to communicate NELAC VII working session needs to EPA.	W. Ingersoll	7/31/00
4.	Committee to focus on Appendix B (Technical Training Standard) and to review Florida Checklists for discussion of technical training criteria at committee's 8/9/00 teleconference.	All	8/9/00
5.	Subcommittee to coordinate on development of Appendix B.	J. Hall D. Friedman R. Sheibley	Ongoing
6.	Committee to revisit issues of deadlines for assessment reports and appeals process for interpretation of Standards.	All	TBD

**PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 26, 2000**

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